

# Parents FLAG Edmonton

## Newsletter

October 1993

Next meeting will be: Tuesday October 19, 1993 @ 7:30 pm

For more information phone Lynne at [REDACTED]

### Guest Speaker

A special guest will be at our October 19 meeting. Murray Billet will be speaking on being a father and a gay husband. Murray Billet will be speaking at 8:00 pm, don't miss it as he is an excellent speaker.

this network of sharing and commitments that most accurately describes the family unit, regardless of blood, legal ties, adoption or marriage.

### News From PFLAG HQ

PFLAG has changed its name at the recent convention held in New Orleans. Our National Organization has changed our official name to Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. The acronym of PFLAG will remain unchanged.

### Another Small Step

The human rights commission has convinced the federal government to pay spousal benefits for same sex couples. Whether the provincial government will take the same action is yet to be seen.

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**Call Carol at 456-5928 for more information.**

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### Hate is Not a Family Value

The American Home Economics Association defines the family as "two or more persons who share resources, share responsibility for decisions, share values and goals, and have commitment to one another over time". The family is that climate that one comes home to and it is



## Membership Applications

Membership applications are once again being mailed out for the new year. Many of us did not receive any information or newsletters from P-FLAG headquarters last year and thus feel somewhat cheated. Since part of our dues go to P-FLAG headquarters, Cindy will be inquiring into a reimbursement from them.

Please note the change in the membership fee for this year. The membership for receiving news letters only will be \$10, this includes the cost of mailing. To receive information from P-FLAG federation, the membership must be received in full.

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Individual Membership	\$15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Household Membership	\$25	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student/limited Income	\$10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newsletter subscription	\$10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Donation	\$	<input type="checkbox"/>

Make cheques payable to P-FLAG/Edmonton and Mail to:

Cindy [REDACTED]

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Prov. \_\_\_\_\_

P-FLAG is a non-profit and all volunteer support P-FLAG group not affiliated with any ethnic, political or religious organizations. Memberships are available for all. All information collected is strictly confidential.

I would like to thank Lars for helping me with the newsletter. Lars is a U of A student with very limited time, but still finds the time to do the newsletter on his computer for me. If there is a parent willing to help in other ways with the newsletter please call me. [REDACTED]

Joan





# Answers About Homosexuality

## 1. What is sexual orientation?

Sexual orientation is a way of classifying individuals according to the gender of the people they are attracted to. "Attraction" includes all the feelings you feel if you have ever fallen in love: powerful emotional, romantic, affectionate, and sexual feelings of wanting to be with and share with another person.

Heterosexuals are people whose deep feelings of attraction and romantic love are directed toward members of the other gender; homosexuals are people who feel these same feelings toward members of their own gender; bisexuals are people who experience these feelings toward persons of both genders.

## 2. Is homosexuality a mental illness or emotional problem?

No. Psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health professionals agree that homosexuality is not an illness, mental disorder, or emotional problem.

Much objective scientific research over the past 35 years shows us that homosexuals have no more emotional or social problems than heterosexuals. In fact, the only proven difference between the two is that of sexual orientation.

Homosexuality was thought to be a mental illness in the past because mental health professionals lacked objective information about homosexuality, and based their theories on assumptions, including false stereotypes and prejudice. When they examined the objective data, they had to change their views. Nearly 20 years ago, the term "homosexuality" was removed from the official manual that lists all mental and emotional disorders.

## 3. What causes a person to have a homosexual orientation?

Sexual orientation develops early in life and appears to be affected by both heredity and by life experiences.

## 4. Is homosexual orientation a choice?

Research indicates that sexual orientation is not a choice and cannot be changed for most people. Sexual orientation involves much more than performing sexual acts: It involves powerful inner feelings, self-concept, and social identity.

Research shows that most homosexual individuals begin to experience homosexual feelings by early adolescence, and that homosexual behavior occurs an average of three years later. For some individuals, homosexual behavior (such as romantic relationships) is delayed until well into adulthood. Thus, sexual orientation develops before most people are able even to understand such complex matters, but expressions of sexual orientation may develop at any age.

Psychologists generally agree that people who accept and integrate their sexual orientation (accept and act in accordance with their inner feelings) are psychologically better adjusted than those who don't. Thus, homosexually oriented people can refrain from acting upon their feelings and from letting others know of their sexual orientation, but only at a substantial cost to their personal well-being.

## 5. Can sexual orientation be changed?

Sexual orientation can't usually be changed, and attempts to change it can be harmful. Changing one's sexual orientation isn't simply a matter of changing one's sexual behavior: It requires altering one's emotional, romantic, and sexual feelings, and restructuring one's self-concept and social identity.

Some practitioners have developed so-called conversion therapies intended to change homosexual orientation to heterosexual. These therapies don't generally work. Some researchers claim success with conversion therapy, but the methods they used to decide whether conversion was successful are questionable. Some religious groups also claim success in converting homosexual



orientation to heterosexual, but these claims aren't documented in such a way that they can be scientifically evaluated.

Conversion therapies can result in serious psychological damage. Rather than creating heterosexual feelings, conversion therapies can deprive lesbians and gay men of the ability to feel significant romantic or sexual attraction toward anyone.

## **6. Should homosexual orientation be changed?**

There's no objective or scientific reason to attempt conversion of lesbians or gay men to heterosexual orientation. Homosexuality is in no way harmful to them or to society. Attempts at conversion can be harmful, and may encourage attitudes of prejudice. Such attitudes are harmful to society.

Rather than trying to change the orientation of homosexuals, most mental health professionals work to help persons of all sexual orientations accept and integrate their inner feelings and overcome their prejudices and false beliefs about one another.

## **7. Does a homosexual orientation affect a person's work or ability to contribute to society?**

No. Objective data show that homosexual and heterosexual people lead equally stable and productive lives.

## **8. Are there negative effects on children raised by a homosexual parent?**

No. Studies comparing groups of children raised by homosexual and by heterosexual parents find no differences between the two groups of children in their intelligence, psychological adjustment, social adjustment, popularity with friends, development of sex role identity (that is, acting and feeling feminine for girls or acting and feeling masculine for boys), or development of sexual orientation.

## **9. Do homosexuals molest children?**

No, not any more than heterosexuals or bisexuals. A nationally recognized expert on child sexual abuse, Nicholas Groth, PhD, stated that in his 25 years of work with child abusers, he has never encountered an instance in which a gay person with a same-sex adult partner abandoned that partner to molest a child (The Oregonian, 9/18/92).

A researcher named Paul Cameron published some studies that claim homosexuals molest children more often than heterosexuals. However, these methods are questioned by many psychologists and psychiatrists. As a result, the studies give no accurate information about the sexual orientation of the child molesters. Moreover, Cameron and his work have been criticized by a number of professional organizations including: the Nebraska Psychological Association disassociated itself from his statements on sexuality; and the American Sociological Association complained he consistently misinterprets sociological work on sexuality (The Oregonian, 10/1/92).

The majority of information in this factsheet is taken from a recent review of research findings on sexual orientation by Gregory Herek, PhD. The review, titled "Myths about Sexual Orientation: A Lawyer's Guide to Social Science Research," was published in Law and Sexuality (Vol. 1, Summer 1991). This factsheet was prepared by Sandra Moreland, Robinann Cogburn, and Maryka Biaggio for the Oregon Psychological Association. A detailed list of references is available on request.

**If you have questions or would like more information, please contact either**

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